

VZCZCXR05215
PP RUEHMR
DE RUEHMR #0144 0791427
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P R 201427Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1954
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 2219

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 000144

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR AF/S DIR - D. MOZENA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/20/2016
TAGS: PREL PGOV KICC LT
SUBJECT: ARTICLE 98 STATUS

REF: MASERU 124 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: JUNE CARTER PERRY, AMBASSADOR, EXEC, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) The Article 98 ball is in Lesotho's court following presentation of a new U.S. draft on March 10. Ambassador reviewed the new draft with FOMIN Moleleki on March 16. The Minister stated he was not a lawyer and called an officer from the Attorney General's (AG) office to make sure the AG had the latest version for any legal ramifications. (Note: The AG himself was instructed by the FOMIN to contact us after his review. We will follow up again in any event. End Note)

¶2. (C) Of interest, we have learned from the Prosecutor within the AG's office that Ambassador Maema, Lesotho's permrep at the UN, was scheduled to arrive over the weekend to "brief" GOL officials on the UN session. Maema was the former AG who expressed rabid opposition to an Article 98 agreement with the U.S. during a June 2005 Cabinet meeting. The full extent of his visit now is unknown. He comes at a time when MFA is without a permanent secretary and its Foreign Minister is still reverberating from the shock of an alleged assassination attempt (septels). Announced MFA changes (e.g. a new Principal Secretary) have not materialized.

SIPDIS

¶3. (C) The Article 98 issue is slated to be discussed by the Cabinet again on April 20, according to senior Finance Minister Thahane. MFA officials continue to confirm their, and the Prime Minister's, interest in a signed agreement.

PERRY